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Comments from Consumer
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To whom it may concern:

As a late deafened adult with a progressive hearing loss I would like to share my thoughts on the current state of closed captioning.

My television is my alarm clock and comes on automatically at 6:00 a.m. Pacific time to the ABC affiliate in my area. On the morning of September 11, 2001, I awoke to a live broadcast showing a picture of the World Trade Center with a small fire near the top. I couldn't understand the announcer and there was no captioning feed coming through the live broadcast at that time. I woke my daughter and asked her to listen and tell me what was happening, but at that time of the morning a 14 year old isn't very cooperative and just said some plane crashed into the WTC. A few seconds later we saw the second plane crash into the Tower. I flipped through the channels until I finally found a station with captioning available. I believe it was CNN.

I use this as an example of how imperative captioning is for people who cannot understand spoken language on television in a LIVE broadcast situation. Although no one knew what was happening that day, I felt I was at least in tune with the rest of the world as we watched those horrifying events. I was able to understand what everyone else could hear when the captioning became available

As for entertainment programming, I only watch programs that are captioned. There is no point to do so otherwise. I support advertisers who caption their commercials more than those who do not. I attend the theater when they show current movies with captioning. There are usually 4 showings of the movie, two during the day and two during the evening and always on a week day. This is not always convenient but I try to attend when my schedule allows.

One of the problems I frequently encounter is from the local market affiliates who somehow interrupt the captioning feed from the network. It is a regular occurrence for movies or programs that end at 11:00 PM to have the captioning shut off in the last 4 – 5 minutes at the crucial moment when you find out "*who done it.*" There is nothing more frustrating than to watch a 2 hour movie and MISS the ending because the captioning was turned off! I've been told this happens when they are setting up for the local news broadcast but it could be avoided if someone paid more attention to which buttons they pushed!

I hear rumors that there will be fewer requirements for captioning in the future. I hope this is not the case!

In closing, I would like to share one more piece of insight about people with hearing loss and communication. I speak broadly but on behalf of MANY hard of hearing people I know who feel and experience the same things.

Everything bit of information we acquire comes from reading! We don't overhear conversations at the water cooler. We can't tune in the latest talk show on the radio and hear the debates or discussions over local, national or international issues. We are unable to multi-task and listen with "one ear" to the television program while we balance the check book or do chores. We don't even have access to the motivational tapes or CDs available to encourage us to be better sales people or thinner or smarter, etc. WE ARE LIMITED TO WHAT WE CAN READ! Any lessening of captioned programming LIMITS the information people with hearing loss have available to them whether that is entertainment, education or news!

I appreciate the effort the FCC and the consumer organizations have gone to to ensure that people like myself have access to news, entertainment and educational television and theater. I hope you will continue to recognize the importance of captioning services and require new programming (and old) to be captioned.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda Day
Hard of Hearing consumer